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LETTERS SHOWING THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE
EARLY NEGRO CHURCHES OF GEORGIA AND
THE WEST INDIES¹

AN ACCOUNT OF SEVERAL BAPTIST CHURCHES, CONSISTING CHIEFLY
OF NEGRO SLAVES: PARTICULARLY OF ONE AT KINGSTON, IN
JAMAICA: AND ANOTHER AT SAVANNAH IN GEORGIA

A letter from the late Rev. Mr. Joseph Cook of the Euhaw, upper Indian Land, South Carolina, bearing date Sept. 15, 1790, "A poor negro, commonly called, among his own friends, Brother George, has been so highly favoured of God, as to plant the first Baptist Church in Savannah, and another in Jamaica:" This account produced an earnest desire to know the circumstances of both these societies. Hence letters were written to the Rev. Mr. Cook at the Euhaw; to Mr. Jonathan Clarke, at Savannah; to Mr. Wesley's people at Kingston; with a view to obtain information, in which particular regard was had to the *character* of this poor but successful minister of Christ. Satisfactory accounts have been received from each of these quarters, and a letter from brother George himself, containing an answer to more than fifty questions proposed in a letter to him: We presume to give an epitome of the whole to our friends, hoping that they will have the goodness to let a plain unlettered people convey their ideas in their own simple way.

Brother George's words are distinguished by inverted commas, and what is not so marked, is either matter compressed or information received from such persons to whom application has been made of it.

George Liele, called also George *Sharp* because his owner's name was Sharp, in a letter dated Kingston, Dec. 18, 1791, says, "I was born in Virginia, my father's name was Liele, and my mother's name Nancy; I can not ascertain much of them, as I went to several parts of America when young, and at length resided in New Georgia; but was informed both by white and black people, that my father was the only black person who knew the

¹ Most of these letters were written by two colored preachers, George Liele and Andrew Bryan.

Lord in a spiritual way in that country: I always had a natural fear of God from my youth, and was often checked in conscience with thoughts of death, which barred me from many sins and bad company. I knew no other way at that time to hope for salvation but only in the performance of my good works." *About two years before the late war*, "the Rev. Mr. Matthew Moore,² one Sabbath afternoon, as I stood with curiosity to hear him, he unfolded all my dark views, opened my best behaviour and good works to me which I thought I was to be saved by, and I was convinced that I was not in the way to heaven, but in the way to hell. This state I laboured under for the space of five or six months. The more I heard or read, the more I" saw that I "was condemned as a sinner before God; till at length I was brought to perceive that my life hung by a slender thread, and if it was the will of God to cut me off at that time, I was sure I should be found in hell, as sure as God was in Heaven. I saw my condemnation in my own heart, and I found no way wherein I could escape the damnation of hell, only through the merits of my dying Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; which caused me to make intercession with Christ, for the salvation of my poor immortal soul; and I full well recollect, I requested of my Lord and Master to give me a work, I did not care how mean it was, only to try and see how good I would do it." When he became acquainted with the method of salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, he soon found relief, particularly at a time when he was earnestly engaged in prayer; yea, he says, "I felt such love and joy as my tongue was not able to express. After this I declared before the congregation of believers the work which God had done for my soul, and the same minister, the Rev. Matthew Moore, baptized me, and I continued in this church about four years, till the vacuation" of Savannah by the British. When Mr. Liele was called by grace himself, he was desirous of promoting the felicity of others. One who was an eye-witness of it, says, *That he began to discover his love to other negroes, on the same plantation with himself, by reading hymns among them, encouraging them to sing, and sometimes by explaining the most striking parts of them.* His own account is this, "Desiring to prove the sense I had of my obligations to God, I endeavoured to instruct" the people of "my own color in the word of God:

² Mr. Moore was an ordained Baptist minister, of the county of Burke, in Georgia; he died, it seems, some time since. EDITOR.

the white brethren seeing my endeavours, and that the word of the Lord seemed to be blessed, gave me a call at a quarterly meeting to preach before the congregation." Afterwards Mr. Moore took the sense of the church concerning brother Liele's abilities, when it appeared to be their unanimous opinion, "that he was possessed of ministerial gifts," and according to the custom which obtains in some of the American churches, he was licensed as a probationer. He now exercised at different plantations, especially on those Lord's Day evenings when there was no service performed in the church to which he belonged; and preached "about three years at Brunton land, and at Yamacraw," which last place is about half a mile from Savannah. Mr. Henry Sharp, his master, being a deacon of the church which called George Liele to the work of the ministry, some years before his death gave him his freedom, only he continued in the family till his master's exit. Mr. Sharp in the time of the war was an officer, and was at last killed in the king's service, by a ball which shot off his hand. The author of this account handled the bloody glove, which he wore when he received the fatal wound. Some persons were at this time dissatisfied with George's liberation, and threw him into prison, but by producing the proper papers he was released; his particular friend in this business was colonel Kirkland. "At the vacuation of the country I was partly obliged to come to Jamaica, as an indented servant, for money I owed him, he promising to be my friend in this country. I was landed at Kingston, and by the colonel's recommendation to general Campbell, the governor of the Island, I was employed by him two years, and on leaving the island, he gave me a written certificate from under his own hand of my good behaviour. As soon as I had settled Col. Kirkland's demands on me, I had a certificate of my freedom from the vestry and governor, according to the act of this Island, both for myself and family. Governor Campbell left the Island. I began, about September 1784, to preach in Kingston, in a small private house, to a good smart congregation, and I formed the church with four brethren from America besides myself, and the preaching took very good effect with the poorer sort, especially the slaves. The people at first persecuted us both at meetings and baptisms, but, God be praised, they seldom interrupt us now. We have applied to the Honourable House of Assembly, with a petition of our distresses, being poor people, desiring to

worship Almighty God according to the tenets of the Bible, and they have granted us liberty, and given us their sanction. Thanks be to God we have liberty to worship him as we please in the Kingdom. You ask about those who," in a judgment of charity, "have been converted to Christ. I think they are about four hundred and fifty. I have baptized four hundred in Jamaica. At Kingston I baptize in the sea, at Spanish Town in the river, and at convenient places in the country. We have nigh *three hundred and fifty members*; a few white people among them, one white brother of the first battalion of royals, from England, baptized by Rev. Thomas Davis. Several members have been dismissed to other churches, and twelve have died. I have sent enclosed" an account of "the conversion and death of some. A few of Mr. Wesley's people, after immersion, join us and continue with us. We have, together with well wishers and followers, in different parts of the country, about fifteen hundred people. We receive none into the church without a few lines from their owners of their good behaviour towards them and religion. The creoles of the country, after they are converted and baptized, as God enables them, prove very faithful. I have deacons and elders, a few; and teachers of small congregations in the town and country, where convenience suits them to come together; and I am pastor. I preach twice on the Lord's Day, in the forenoon and afternoon, and twice in the week, and have not been absent six Sabbath Days since I formed the church in this country. I receive nothing for my services; I preach, baptize, administer the Lord's Supper, and travel from one place to another to publish the gospel, and to settle church affairs, all freely. I have one of the chosen men, whom I baptized, a deacon of the church, and a native of this country, who keeps the regulations of church matters; and I promoted a *free school* for the instruction of the children, both free and slaves, and he is the schoolmaster.

"I cannot justly tell what is my age, as I have no account of the time of my birth, but I suppose I am about forty years old. I have a wife and four children. My wife was baptized by me in Savannah, at Brunton land, and I have every satisfaction in life from her. She is much the same age as myself. My eldest son is nineteen years, my next son seventeen, the third fourteen, and the last child, a girl of eleven years; they are all members of the church. My occupation is a farmer, but as the seasons in this part of the country, are uncertain, I also keep a team of horses, and waggons for the

carrying goods from one place to another, which I attend to myself, with the assistance of my sons; and by this way of life have gained the good will of the public, who recommend me to business, and to some very principal work for government.

"I have a few books, some good old authors and sermons, and one large bible that was given to me by a gentleman; a good many of our members can read, and are all desirous to learn; they will be very thankful for a few books to read on Sundays and other days.

"The last accounts I had from Savannah were, that the Gospel had taken very great effect both there and in South Carolina. Brother Andrew Bryan, a black minister at Savannah, has two HUNDRED MEMBERS, in full fellowship and had certificates from their owners of ONE HUNDRED MORE, who had given in their experiences and were ready to be baptized. Also I received accounts from Nova Scotia of a black Baptist preacher, Brother David George, who was a member of the church at Savannah; he had the permission of the Governor to preach in three provinces; his members in full communion were then *sixty*, white and black, the Gospel spreading. Brother Amos is at Providence, he writes me that the Gospel has taken good effect, and is spreading greatly; he has about THREE HUNDRED MEMBERS. Brother Jessy Gaulsing, another black minister, preaches near Augusta, in South Carolina, at a place where I used to preach; he was a member of the church at Savannah, and has *sixty members*; and a great work is going on there.

"I agree to election, redemption, the fall of Adam, regeneration, and perseverance, knowing the promise is to all who endure, in grace, faith, and good works, to the end, shall be saved.

"There is no Baptist church in this country but ours. We have purchased a piece of land, at the east end of Kingston, containing three acres for the sum of 155 l.³ currency, and on it have begun a meeting-house fifty-seven feet in length by thirty-seven in breadth. We have raised the brick wall eight feet high from the foundation, and intend to have a gallery. Several gentlemen, members of the house of assembly, and other gentlemen, have subscribed towards the building about 40 l. The chief part of our congregation are SLAVES, and their owners allow them, in common, but three or four

³ 140 l. currency is 100 l. sterling.

bits per week⁴ for allowance to feed themselves; and out of so small a sum we cannot expect any thing that can be of service from them; if we did it would soon bring a scandal upon religion; and the FREE PEOPLE in our society are but poor, but they are all willing, both free and slaves, to do what they can. As for my part, I am too much entangled with the affairs of the world to go on," as I would, "with my design, in supporting the cause: this has, I acknowledge, been a great hindrance to the Gospel in one way; but as I have endeavored to set a good example" of industry "before the inhabitants of the land, it has given general satisfaction another way. . . . And, Rev. Sir, we think the Lord has put it in the power of the Baptist societies in England to help and assist us in completing this building, which we look upon will be the greatest undertaking ever was in this country for the bringing of souls from darkness into the light of the Gospel. . . . And as the Lord has put it into your heart to enquire after us, we place all our confidence in you, to make our circumstances known to the several Baptist churches in England; and we look upon you as our father, friend, and brother.

"Within the brick wall we have a shelter, in which we worship, until our building can be accomplished.

"Your . . . letter was read to the church two or three times, and did create a great deal of love and warmth throughout the whole congregation, who shouted for joy and comfort, to think that the Lord had been so gracious as to satisfy us in this country with the very same religion with . . . our beloved brethren in the old country, according to the scriptures; and that such a worthy . . . of London, should write in so loving a manner to such poor worms as we are. And I beg leave to say, That the whole congregation sang out that they would, through the assistance of God, remember you in their prayers. They altogether give their Christian love to you, and all the worthy professors of Jesus Christ in your church at London, and beg the prayers of your congregation, and the prayers of the churches in general, wherever it pleases you to make known our circumstances. I remain with the utmost love . . . Rev. Sir, your unworthy fellow-labourer, servant, and brother in Christ.

(Signed) GEORGE LIELE.

⁴ A bit was seven-pence half penny currency, or about five pence half-penny sterling.

P. S. We have chosen twelve trustees, all of whom are members of our church, whose names are specified in the title; the title proved and recorded in the Secretary's office of this island.

I would have answered your letter much sooner, but am encumbered with business: the whole island under arms; several of our members and a deacon were obliged to be on duty; and I being trumpeter to the troop of horse in Kingston, am frequently called upon. And also by order of government I was employed in carrying all the cannon that could be found lying about this part of the country. This occasioned my long delay, which I beg you will excuse.—*Baptist Annual Register*, 1790-3, pages 332-337.

TO THE REV. MR. JOHN RIPPON

KINGSTON IN JAMAICA, NOV. 26, 1791.

Reverend Sir,

The perusal of your letter of the 15th July last, gave me much pleasure—to find that you had interested yourself to serve the glorious cause Mr. Liele is engaged in. He has been for a considerable time past very zealous in the ministry; but his congregation being chiefly slaves, they had it not in their power to support him, therefore he has been obliged to do it from his own industry; this has taken a considerable part of his time and much of his attention from his labours in the ministry; however, I am led to believe that it has been of essential service to the cause of GOD, for his industry has set a good example to his flock, and has put it out of the power of enemies to religion to say, that he has been eating the bread of idleness, or lived upon the poor slaves. The idea that too much prevails here amongst the masters of slaves is, that if their minds are considerably enlightened by religion or otherwise, that it would be attended with the most dangerous consequences; and this has been the only cause why the Methodist ministers and Mr. Liele have not made a greater progress in the ministry amongst the slaves. Alas! how much is it to be lamented, that a full QUARTER OF A MILLION of poor souls should so long remain in a state of nature; and that masters should be so blind to their own interest as not to know the difference between obedience enforced by the lash of the whip and that which flows from religious principles. Although I much admire the *general doctrine* preached in the Methodist church, yet I by no means approve of their discipline set up by Mr. Wesley, that reverend man of God. I very early saw into the impropriety of

admitting slaves into their societies *without permission of their owners*, and told them the consequences that would attend it; but they rejected my advice; and it has not only prevented the increase of their church, but has raised them many enemies. Mr. Liele has very wisely acted a different part. He has, I believe, admitted no slaves into society but those who had obtained permission from their owners, by which he has made many friends; and I think the Almighty is now opening a way for another church in the capital, where the Methodists could not gain any ground: a short time will determine it, of which I shall advise you.—I really have not time to enter so fully on this subject as I wish, being very much engaged in my own temporal affairs, and at present having no clerk.—The love I bear to the cause of God, and the desire I have of being any ways instrumental to the establishing of it in this land of darkness, has led me to write this: but before I conclude, I have some very interesting particulars to lay before you:—Mr. Liele has by the aid of the congregation and the assistance of some few people, raised the walls of a church ready to receive the roof, but has not the means to lay it on and finish it; nor do I see any prospect of its going further, without he receives the aid of some religious institution from home. One hundred and fifty pounds, I think, would complete it; and if this sum could be raised, it would greatly serve the cause of GOD, and might be the means of bringing many hundred souls, who are now in a state of darkness, to the knowledge of our great Redeemer. If this could be raised the sooner the better. Our family contributed towards the purchase of the Methodist chapel; nor shall our mite be wanting to forward this work if it meets with any encouragement from home.—I am a stranger to you, but you may know my character from Daniel Shea, Esq.; and John Parker, Esq.; merchants in your city; or from Mr. Samuel Yockney, tea-dealer, in Bedford Row.

Perhaps you may expect me to say something of Mr. Liele's character. He is a very industrious man—decent and humble in his manners, and, I think, a good man. This is my opinion of him. I love all Christians of every denomination, and remain, with respect and sincere regard,

Reverend Sir,

Your friend and servant,

(Signed) STEPHEN COOKE.

—*Baptist Annual Register*, 1790–1793, pages 338 and 339.

SKETCHES OF THE BLACK BAPTIST CHURCH AT SAVANNAH, IN
GEORGIA; AND OF THEIR MINISTER ANDREW BRYAN, EX-
TRACTED FROM SEVERAL LETTERS

SAVANNAH, July 19, 1790, &c.

Dear Brother,

“With pleasure I receive your favor of the 20th ult. more particularly, as I trust the correspondence may be of use to Brother Andrew’s church; concerning the origin of which, I have taken from him the following account.

“Our Brother *Andrew* was one of the black hearers of *George Liele*,” of whom an account was given before; and was hopefully converted by his preaching from chapter III. of St. John’s Gospel, and a clause of verse 7, *Ye must be born again*; prior to the departure of *George Liele* for Jamaica, he came up from Tybee River, where departing vessels frequently lay ready for sea, and baptized our Brother *Andrew*, with a wench of the name *Hagar*, both belonging to *Jonathan Bryan*, Esq.; these were the last performances of our Brother *George Liele* in this quarter. About eight or nine months after his departure, *Andrew* began to exhort his black hearers, with a few whites. *Edward Davis*, Esq.; indulged him and his hearers to erect a rough building on his land at *Yamacraw*, in the suburbs of Savannah for a place of worship, of which they have been very artfully dispossessed. In this their beginning of worship they had frequent interruptions from the whites; as it was at a time that a number of blacks had absconded, and some had been taken away by the British. This was a plausible excuse for their wickedness in their interruptions. The whites grew more and more inveterate; taking numbers of them before magistrates—they were imprisoned and whipped. *Sampson*, a brother of *Andrew*, belonging to the same master, was converted about a year after him, and continued with him in all their persecutions, and does until now. These, with many others, were twice imprisoned, and about fifty were severely whipped, particularly *Andrew*, who was cut and bled abundantly, while he was under their lashes; Brother *Hambleton* says, he held up his hand, and told his persecutors that he rejoiced not only to be whipped, but *would freely suffer death for the cause of Jesus Christ*. “The chief justice *Henry Osborne*, Esq.; *James Habersham*, Esq.;¹ and *David Montague*,

¹ The Rev. Mr. George Whitefield’s intimate friend.

Esq.; were their examnants, and released them. Their kind *master* also interceded for them; and was much affected and grieved at their punishment." Brother *Hambleton* was also an advocate for them; and further says, that at one of their examinations *George Walton*, Esq.; spoke freely in favour of the sufferers, saying, that such treatment would be condemned even among barbarians. "The chief justice *Osborne* then gave them liberty to continue their worship between sunrising and sun set; and their indulgent *master* told the magistrate, that he would give them the liberty of his own *house or his barn*, at a place called *Brampton*, about three miles from town, and that they should not be interrupted in their worship. In consequence hereof, they made use of their masters *barn*, where they had a number of hearers, with little or no interruption, for about two years. During the time of worship at *Brampton* Brother *Thomas Burton*, an elderly baptist preacher, paid them a visit, examined and baptized about *eighteen* blacks: at another period while there they received a visit from our brother *Abraham Marshall*,² who examined and baptized about forty and gave them two certificates from under his hand;" copies of which follow:

This is to *certify*, that upon examination into the experiences and characters of a number of *Ethiopians*, and adjacent to *Savannah*, it appears that God has brought them out of darkness into the light of the Gospel, and given them fellowship one with the other; believing it is the will of Christ, we have constituted them a church of Jesus Christ, to keep up his worship and ordinances.

(Signed) A. MARSHALL, V.D.M.

Jan. 19, 1788.

This is to certify, that the Ethiopian church of Jesus Christ at *Savannah*, have called their beloved *Andrew* to the work of the ministry. We have examined into his qualifications, and believing it to be the will of the great Head of the church, we have appointed him to preach the Gospel, and to administer the ordinances, as God in his providence may call.

(Signed) A. MARSHALL, V.D.M.

² The Editor of the Baptist Annual Register said that he had not the honor of a correspondence with this respectable minister but that his name stood thus in the Georgia Association of 1788. At "Kioka, Abraham Marshall, 22 baptized, 230" members in all.

Jan. 20, 1788.

"After the death of their master his son, Dr. *William Bryan*, generously continued them the use of the *barn* for worship, until the estate was divided among the family. Our Brother *Andrew*, by consent of parties, purchased his freedom, bought a lot at *Yamacraw*, and built a residence near the dwelling house which their master had given *Sampson* liberty to build on his lot; and which have ever been made use of for worship. But by the division of their master's estate, the lot whereon *Sampson* had built a house to live in, and which until this time continues to be used for worship, by *Andrew*, fell into the hands of an attorney, who married a daughter of the deceased Mr. Bryan, and receives no less than 12 l a year for it. *Sampson* serves as a clerk, but frequently exhorts in the absence of his brother who has his appointments in different places to worship.

"Brother *Andrew's* account of his number in full communion is TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE, and about THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY have been received as converted followers, many of whom have not permission" from their owners "to be baptized.—The whole number is judged to be about five hundred and seventy-five, from the towns being taken to this present July. I have consulted brother *Hambleton*, who thinks they have need of a few Bibles, the Baptist Confession of Faith, and Catechism; Wilson on Baptism, some of Bunyan's works, or any other that your wisdom may think useful to an illiterate people. They all join in prayers for you and yours and beg your intercession at the throne of grace for them, as well as for the small number of whites that dwell here; and among them I hope you will not forget your poor unworthy brother, and believe me, with sincere affections and brotherly love, your in the bonds of the Gospel,

(Signed) JONATHAN CLARKE ³

Concerning the church at Savannah, the late Rev. Mr. Joseph Cook, of the Euhaw, upper Indian land, thus writes: "From the enclosed you will see how it became a church, and what they have suffered, which is extremely affecting, but they now begin to rise from obscurity and to appear great. I have some acquaintance with their pastor, and have heard him preach; his *gifts are small*, but he is *clear in the grand doctrines* of the Gospel.—I believe him

³ The character of Mr. Jonathan Clarke, according to the writer, might be learned at May and Hill's, merchants, Church-row, Fenchurch-street.

to be *truly pious* and he has been the instrument of doing more good among the poor slaves than all the learned doctors in America."

The friends of our adorable Redeemer will, no doubt, rejoice to find that this large body of Christians negroes, under the patronage of some of the most respectable persons in their city, "have opened a subscription for the erecting of a place of worship in the city of Savannah, for the society of black people of the Baptist denomination—the property to be vested in the hands of seven or more persons in trust for the church and congregation."

Their case ⁴ is sent to England, recommended by

J. JOHNSON,⁵ Minister of the Union Church.

JOHN HAMILTON.

EBENEZER HILLS.

JOSEPH WATTS.

D. MOSES VALLOTTON.

JOHN MILLENE.

ABRAHAM LEGGETT.

Since the preceding account has been in the press, other letters have been received, of which the following is an extract.

KINGSTON, JAMAICA, May 18, 1792.

Rev. and Dear Sir,

In answer to yours I wrote December 18 last, and as I have not received a line from you since, I send this, not knowing but the other was miscarried. Mr. Green has called upon me, and very kindly offered his service to deliver a letter from me into your hands; he also advised me to send you a copy of our church covenant, which I have done: being a collection of some of the principal texts of scripture which we observe, both in America and this country, for the direction of our practice. It is read once a month here on sacrament meetings, that our members may examine if they live according to all those laws which they profess,

⁴ It was committed to the care of the Editor of the Baptist Annual Register.

⁵ The Rev. Mr. Johnson was well known in London; he sailed for America in the fall of 1790; and laboured in the *Orphan House* at Savannah, built by Mr. Whitefield, and assigned in trust to the countess of Huntingdon. On May 30, 1775, the orphan house building caught fire and was entirely consumed, except the two wings which still remained. Editor of the Baptist Annual Register.

covenanted and agreed to; by this means our church is kept in scriptural subjection. As I observe in my last the chiefest part of our society are poor illiterate slaves, some living on sugar estates, some on mountains, pens, and other settlements, that have no learning, no not to know so much as a letter in the book; but the reading this covenant once a month, when all are met together from the different parts of the island, keeps them in mind of the commandments of God. And by shewing the same to the gentlemen of the legislature, and the justices, and magistrates, when I applied for a sanction, it gave them general satisfaction; and wherever a negro servant is to be admitted, their owners, after the perusal of it, are better satisfied. We are this day raising the roof on the walls of our meeting house; the height of the walls from the foundation is seventeen feet. I have a right to praise God, and glorify him for the manifold blessings I have received, and do still receive from him. I have full liberty from *Spanish Town*, the capital of this country, to preach the Gospel throughout the Island: the Lord is blessing the work everywhere, and believers are added daily to the church. My tongue is not able to express the goodness of the Lord. As our meeting house is out of town "(about a mile and a half)," I have a steeple on it, to have a bell to give notice to our people and more particularly to the owners of slaves that are in our society, that they may know the hour on which we meet, and be satisfied that our servants return in due time; for which reason I shall be greatly obliged to you to send me out, as soon as possible, a bell that can be heard about two *miles* distance, with the price. I have one at present, but it is rather small. The slaves may then be permitted to come and return in due time, for at present we meet very irregular in respect to hours. I remain, with the utmost regards, love and esteem,

Rev. Sir, yours, &c.

GEORGE LIELE.

Copy of a Recommendatory Letter of Hannah Williams, a Negro Woman, in London. It is all in print, except the Part of it which now appears in Italics.

Kingston, Jamaica, we that are of the Baptist Religion, being separated from all churches, excepting they are of the same faith and order after Jesus Christ, according to the scriptures, do certify, that our beloved *Sister Hannah Williams, during the time she was*

a member of the Church at Savannah, until the evacuation, did walk as a faithful, well-behaved Christian, and to recommend her to join any church of the same faith and order. Given under my hand this 21st day of December, in the year of our Lord, 1791.

GEORGE LIELE.

—*Baptist Annual Register*, 1790–1793, pages 339–344.

ACCOUNT OF THE NEGRO CHURCH AT SAVANNAH, AND OF
TWO NEGRO MINISTERS

SAVANNAH, Dec. 22, 1792.

Dear Brother Rippon,

By return of Capt. Parrot in the ship Hannah, opportunity offers to acknowledge receipt of your kind favour with two boxes of books agreeable to invoice, which were very thankfully acceptable to our Brother Andrew, as well as to myself, and were delivered agreeable to your request. Within a month past a few of our Christian friends providentially collected at my house, when it was thought necessary we should commence a subscription for the building of a Baptist Meeting-house in this city, as the corporation has given us a lot for that purpose. Mr. Ebenezer Hills and myself were appointed trustees, and we have subscribed £35. 6s. if we can get as much more, we intend to begin the work, please God to smile on our weak endeavours, and the place will be made sufficiently large to accommodate the black people: they have been frowned upon of late by some despisers of religion, who have endeavoured to suppress their meeting together on Thursday evening in the week which was their custom, but is now set aside; so that they only continue worship from the sun rise to sun set on Sabbath days.

I copied brother Andrew's last return of members for brother Silas Mercer, who was here since the association of Coosawhatchie, which is as follows: Return made to the Georgia Association,

Supposed to be two or three years past.....	250
Baptized since (say 80 in this year 1792).....	159 409
Excommunicated.....	8
Dead.....	12 20
Total remaining Nov. 26, 1792.....	389

Brother Andrew lately brought me a letter from brother George Liele, of Jamaica, expressive of the great increase of his church in that island. Andrew is free only since the death of his old master, and purchased his freedom of one of their heirs at the rate of 50 l. He was born at Goose Creek, about 16 miles from Charleston, South Carolina; his mother was a slave, and died in the service of his old master: his father, a slave, yet living, but rendered infirm by age for ten years past. Andrew was married nine years since, which was about the time he and his wife were brought to the knowledge of their wretched state by nature: His wife is named Hannah and remains a slave to the heirs of his older master; they have no children; He was ordained by our Brother Marshall: he has no assistant preacher but his Brother Sampson, who continues a faithful slave, and occasionally exhorts. Some white ministers from the country preach in his church. Jesse Peter, another Negro (whose present master is Thomas Galphin), is now here, and has three or four places in the country where he attends preaching alternately; a number of white people admire him. While he is here, I propose to be informed more particularly of his situation, etc. Although a slave his master indulges him in his profession and gives him uncommon liberty. To return to Andrew, he has four deacons appointed, but not regularly introduced. He supports himself by his own labour. There are no white people that particularly belong to his church, but we have reason to hope that he has been instrumental in the conviction and converting of some whites. Amos, the other Negro minister, mentioned by Brother George, resides at one of the Bahama Islands, which is called New Providence, and is about four days sail towards the southeast. There is one white church at Ogeechee, and another at Effingham; each of these are about twenty miles from this, which are the nearest and only ones. Perhaps fifty of Andrew's church can read, but only three can write.

For the present, accept of the sincere love and kind respects of the Black Society, with Andrew's particular thanks. My ears have heard their petitions to the throne of grace for you particularly, which no doubt they will continue; and let me entreat your prayers for them, and for the connected societies of this State.

Your brother in the Lord Jesus,

JONATHAN CLARKE.

—*Baptist Annual Register*, 1790–1793, pages 540–541.

KINGSTON, Jamaica, Jan. 12, 1793.

Our Meeting-house is now covered in and the lower floor was completed the 24th of last month. We supposed we are indebted for lumber, lime, bricks, &c. between 4 and 500 l. I am not able to express the thanks I owe for your kind attention to me, and the cause of God. The Schoolmaster, together with the members of our church, return their sincere thanks for the books you have been pleased to send them, being so well adapted to the society, they have given great satisfaction.

I hope shortly to send you a full account of the number of people in our societies in different parts of this island. I have baptized near 500.

I have purchased a piece of land in Spanish Town, the capital of this Island, for a burying ground, with a house upon it, which serves for a Meeting-house. James Jones, Esq., one of the magistrates of this town, and Secretary of the Island, told me, that the Hon. William Mitchell, Esq., the Custos, had empowered him to grant me license to preach the Gospel, and they have given me liberty to make mention of their names in any congregation where we are interrupted. Mr. Jones has given permission for all his negroes to be taught the word of God. The gospel is taking great effect in this town. My brethren and sisters in general, most affectionately give their christian love to you, and all the dear lovers of Jesus Christ in your church at London, and beg that they, and all the other churches, will remember the poor Ethiopian Baptists of Jamaica in their prayers, I remain, dear Sir and brother, your unworthy fellow labourer in Christ.

GEORGE LIELE.

—*Baptist Annual Register*, 1790–1793, page 542.

KINGSTON, JAMAICA, April 12, 1793.

Rev. and Dear Sir,

I AM one of the poor, unworthy, helpless creatures born in this island, whom our glorious master Jesus Christ was graciously pleased to call from a state of darkness to the marvelous light of the gospel and since our Lord has bestowed his mercy on my soul, our beloved minister, by consent of the church, appointed me deacon, schoolmaster, and his principal helper.

We have great reason in this island to praise and glorify the Lord for his goodness and loving kindness in sending his blessed Gospel amongst us by our well-beloved minister, Brother Liele.

We were living in slavery to sin and satan, and the Lord hath redeemed our souls to a state of happiness to praise his glorious and ever blessed name; and we hope to enjoy everlasting peace by the promise of our Lord and master Jesus Christ. The blessed Gospel is spreading wonderfully in this island; believers are daily coming into the church and we hope, in a little time, to see Jamaica become a Christian country.

I remain respectfully, Rev. and Dear Sir,

Your poor Brother in Christ,

THOMAS NICHOLS SWIGLE.

Mr. George Gibbs Bailey, of Bristol, now at Kingston, in Jamaica, writes thus, under date May 9, 1793. "I have inquired of all those who I thought could give me an account of Mr. Liele's conduct without prejudice, and I can say with pleasure, what Pilate said, I can *find no fault in this man*. The Baptist church abundantly thrives among the Negroes, more than any denomination in Jamaica; but I am very sorry to say the Methodist church is declining greatly."

Another sensible Gentleman, of Kingston, in Jamaica, much attached to Mr. Wesley's interest, also says, "I will be very candid with you and tell you that I think the Baptist church is the church that will spread the Gospel among the poor Negroes and I hope and trust, as there is reason to believe that your church will be preferred before all others by the Negroes, that those of you who are in affluence will contribute and send out a minister and support him," &c.—*Baptist Annual Register*, 1790–1793, pages 542–543.

FROM THE REV. ABRAHAM MARSHALL, WHO FORMED THE NEGRO CHURCH AT SAVANNAH, TO MR. RIPPON

KIOKA, GEORGIA, May 1, 1793.

Rev. and Dear Sir,

YOURS came safe to hand, and gave singular satisfaction. Neither spreading plains, nor rolling oceans, can prevent us from weeping with those that weep, and rejoicing with those that rejoice. I have had it in contemplation for some time to open a correspondence with our dear friend on the other side of the flood, but my constant travelling has hitherto prevented; I am highly pleased that you have opened the way. . . .

As to the Black Church in Savannah, of which you had a par-

ticular account by Mr. Clarke, I baptized forty-five of them in one day, assisted in the constitution of the church, and ordination of the minister. They have given repeated proofs, by their sufferings, of their zeal for the cause of God and religion; and, I believe, are found in the faith, and strict in discipline.

I am also intimately acquainted with Jessy Golfin; he lives thirty miles below me, in South Carolina, and twelve miles below Augusta; he is a negro servant to Mr. Golfin, who, to his praise be it spoken, treats him with respect. His countenance is grave, his voice charming, his delivery good; nor is he a novice in the mysteries of the kingdom.

From less than the least,

ABRAHAM MARSHALL.

—*Baptist Annual Register*, 1790–1793, page 545.

A LETTER FROM THE NEGRO BAPTIST CHURCH IN SAVANNAH, ADDRESSED TO THE REVEREND DOCTOR RIPPON

SAVANNAH-GEORGIA, U. S. A., Dec. 23, 1800.

My Dear and Reverend Brother,

After a long silence occasioned by various hindrances, I sit down to answer your inestimable favour by the late dear Mr. White, who I hope is rejoicing, far above the troubles and trials of this frail sinful state. All the books mentioned in your truly condescending and affectionate letter, came safe, and were distributed according to your humane directions. You can scarcely conceive, much less than I describe, the gratitude excited by so seasonably and precious a supply of the means of knowledge and grace, accompanied with benevolent proposals of further assistance. Deign, dear sir, to accept our united and sincere thanks for your great kindness to us, who have been so little accustomed to such attentions. Be assured that our prayers have ascended, and I trust will continue to ascend to God, for your health and happiness, and that you may be rendered a lasting ornament to our holy Religion, and a successful Minister of the Gospel.

With much pleasure, I inform you, dear sir, that I enjoy good health, and am strong in body, tho' sixty-three years old, and am blessed with a pious wife, whose freedom I have obtained, and an only daughter and child who is married to a free man, tho' she, and consequently, under our laws, her seven children, five sons and two daughters, are slaves. By a kind Providence I am well provided

for, as to worldly comforts, (tho' I have had very little given me as a minister) having a house and lot in this city, besides the land on which several buildings stand, for which I receive a small rent, and a fifty-six acre tract of land, with all necessary buildings, four miles in the country, and eight slaves; for whose education and happiness, I am enabled thro' mercy to provide.

But what will be infinitely more interesting to my friend, and is so much more prized by myself, we enjoy the rights of conscience to a valuable extent, worshiping in our families and preaching three times every Lord's-day, baptizing frequently from ten to thirty at a time in the Savannah, and administering the sacred supper, not only without molestation, but in the presence, and with the approbation and encouragement of many of the white people. We are now about seven hundred in number, and the work of the Lord goes on prosperously.

An event which has had a happy influence on our affairs was the coming of Mr. Holcombe, late pastor of Euhaw Church, to this place at the call of the heads of the city, of all denominations, who have remained for the thirteen months he has been here among his constant hearers and his liberal supporters. His salary is 2000 a year. He has just had a baptistery, with convenient appendages, built in his place of worship, and has commenced baptizing.

Another dispensation of Providence has much strengthened our hands, and increased our means of information; Henry Francis, lately a slave to the widow of the late Colonel Leroy Hammond, of Augusta, has been purchased by a few humane gentlemen of this place, and liberated to exercise the handsome ministerial gifts he possesses amongst us, and teach our youth to read and write. He is a strong man about forty-nine years of age, whose mother was white and whose father was an Indian. His wife and only son are slaves.

Brother Francis has been in the ministry fifteen years, and will soon receive ordination, and will probably become the pastor of a branch of my large church, which is getting too unwieldy for one body. Should this event take place, and his charge receive constitution, it will take the rank and title of the 3rd Baptist Church in Savannah.

With the most sincere and ardent prayers to God for your temporal and eternal welfare, and with the most unfeigned gratitude, I remain, reverend and dear sir, your obliged servant in the gospel.

(Signed) ANDREW BRYAN.

P. S. I should be glad that my African friends could hear the above account of my affairs.—*The Baptist Annual Register*, 1798–1801, page 366.

STATE OF THE NEGROES IN JAMAICA

KINGSTON, JAMAICA, 1st May, 1802.

Rev. and Dear Sir,

Since our blessed Lord has been pleased to permit me to have the rule of a church of believers, I have baptized one hundred and eleven: and I have a sanction from the Rev. Dr. Thomas Rees, rector of this town and parish, who is one of the ministers appointed by his Majesty to hold an ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the clergy in this island, confirmed by a law passed by the Legislative Body of this island, made and provided for that purpose.

Our church consists of people of colour and black people; some of free condition, but the greater part of them are slaves and natives from the different countries in Africa. Our number both in town and country is about five hundred brethren, and our rule is to baptize once in three months; to receive the Lord's supper the first Lord's-day in every month, after evening services is over; and we have meetings on Tuesday and Thursday evenings throughout the year. The whole body of our church is divided into several classes, which meet every Monday evening, to be examined by their Class-leaders, respecting their daily walk and conversation; and I am truly happy to acquaint you, that since the gospel has been preached in Kingston, there never was so great a prospect for the spread of the fame as there is now. Numbers and numbers of young people are flocking daily to join both our society and the Methodists, who have about four hundred. Religion so spreads in Kingston, that those who will not leave the Church of England to join the Dissenters, have formed themselves into evening societies: it is delightful to hear the people at the different places singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; and to see a great number of them who lived in the sinful state of fornication (which is the common way of living in Jamaica), now married, having put away that deadly sin.

Our place of worship is so very much crowded, that numbers are obliged to stand out of doors: we are going to build a larger chapel as soon as possible. Our people being poor, and so many of them slaves, we are not able to go on so quick as we could

without we should meet with such friends as love our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, to enable us in going on with so glorious an undertaking.

I preach, baptize, marry, attend funerals, and go through every work of the ministry without fee or reward; and I can boldly say, for these sixteen years since I began to teach and instruct the poor Ethiopians in this island, the word of God (though many and many times travelling night and day over rivers and mountains to inculcate the ever-blessed gospel), that I never was complimented with so much as a pair of shoes to my feet, or a hat to my head, or money or apparel, or any thing else as a recompense for my labour and my trouble, from any of my brethren or any other person:—my intention is to follow the example set before me by the holy apostle Saint Paul, to labour with my hands for the things I stand in need of to support myself and family, and to let the church of Christ be free from incumbrances.

We have five trustees to our chapel and burying-ground, eight deacons, and six exhorters.

I had the pleasure of seeing Mr. V. of his Majesty's ship Cumberland, in this town, who has been at my house, and at our chapel, and has seen all my church-books and the manner in which I have conducted our society. He has lately sailed for England with Admiral Montagu; and when he sees you, he will be able to tell you of our proceedings better than I can write.

All my beloved brethren beg their christian love to you and all your dear brethren in the best bonds; and they also beg yourself and them will be pleased to remember the poor Ethiopian Baptists in their prayers, and be pleased also to accept the same from, Reverend and Dear Sir,

Your poor unworthy Brother, in the Lord Jesus Christ,

(Signed) T. N. S.

P. S. Brothers Baker, Gilbert, and others of the Africans, are going on wonderfully in the Lord's service, in the interior part of the country.

July 1, 1802).

—*Baptist Annual Register*, 1801–1802, pages 974–975.

LETTER TO DR. RIPPON

KINGSTON, JAMAICA, Oct. 9, 1802.

Rev. and Dear Sir,

I take the liberty to give you a further account of the spread of the Gospel among us.

On Saturday the 28th August last we laid our foundation stone for the building of the New Chapel; fifty-five feet in length, and twenty-nine and half feet in breath. The brethren assembled together at my house, and walked in procession to our place of worship, where a short discourse was delivered upon the subject, taken from Mat. XVI. 18. *Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against.* As soon as divine service was over, we laid a stone in a pillar provided for that purpose, and on the stone was laid a small marble plate, and these words engraven thereon, St. John's Chapel was founded 28th August 1802, before a large and respectable congregation. The bricklayers have just raised the foundation above the surface of the earth. And as our Church consists chiefly of Slaves, and poor free people, we are not able to go on so fast as we could wish, for which reason we beg leave to call upon our Baptist friends in England, for their help and support of the Ethiopian Baptists, setting forward the glorious cause of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, now in hand.

My last return of the Members in our Society on the 10th August last stood thus, 595

Expelled	2
Dismissed	26
Dead	19
	<hr/> 47

Members in society 10th August 1802.

 548

Since which, we have had sixty-two more added to the Church, almost all young people, and natives of different countries in Africa, which make 610 in Society.

About two months ago, I paid my first visit to a part of our Church held at Clinton Mount, Coffee Plantation, in the parish of Saint Andrew, about 16 miles distance from Kingston, in the High Mountains, where we have a Chapel and 254 brethren. And when I was at breakfast with the Overseer, he said to me, I have no need of a book-keeper (meaning an assistant), I make no use of a whip, for when I am at home my work goes on regular, and when I visit the field I have no fault to find, for every thing is conducted as it ought to be. I observed myself that the brethren were very

industrious, they have a plenty of provisions in their ground, and a plenty of live stock, and they, one and all together, live in unity, brotherly love, and in the bonds of peace.

Last Lords Day, the 3rd October, was our quarterly baptism, when we walked from our place of Worship at noon, to the water, the distance of about a half mile, where I baptised eighteen professing believers, before a numerous and large congregation of spectators, which make in all 254 baptised by me since our commencement.

I am truly happy in acquainting you, that a greater spread of the gospel is taking place at the west end of the island.—A fortnight ago, the Rev. Brother Moses Baker visited me, he is a man of colour, a native of America, one of our baptist brothers and a member of our church, he is employed by a Mr. Winn, (a gentleman down in the country who possesses large and extensive properties in this island), to instruct his negroes in the principles of the Christian religion; and Mr. Vaughan has employed him for that purpose, and both these gentlemen allow him a compensation Mr. Winn finds him in house room, lands, &c., &c., and by his instructing those slaves at Mr. Vaughan's properties, several miles from Mr. Winn's estate, a number of slaves belonging to different properties (no less than 20 sugar estates in number) are become converted souls.—Mr. Baker's errand to me was, that he wanted a person to assist him, he being sent for by a Mr. Hilton, a gentleman down in the parish of Westmoreland (50 miles distance from Mr. Baker's dwelling place), to instruct his and another gentlemen's slaves, on two large sugar estates, into the word of God, producing to me at the same time the letters and invitations he received. I gave him brother George Vineyard, one our exhorters, and old experienced professor (who has been called by grace upwards of eighteen years) to assist him; he also is a native of America, and this gentleman Mr. Hilton, has provided a House, and maintenance, a salary, and land for him to cultivate for his benefit upon his own estate, and brother Baker declared to me, that he has in the church there, fourteen hundred justified believers, and about three thousand followers, many under conviction for sin. The distance brother Baker is at from me is 136 miles, he has undergone a great deal of persecution and severe trials for the preaching of the gospel, but our Lord has delivered him safe out of all—Myself and brethren were at Mr. Liele's Chapel a few weeks ago at the funeral of one of his elders, he is well, and we were friendly to-

gether. All our brethren unite with me in giving their most christian love to you, and all the dear beloved brethren in your church in the best bonds, and beg, both yourself and them, will be pleased to remember the Ethiopian Baptists in their prayers, and I remain dear Sir, and brother,

Your poor unworthy brother, in the Lord Jesus Christ,
(Signed) THOMAS NICHOLAS SWIGLE.

P. S. These sugar estates, in the parish where Brother Baker resides, are very large and extensive; and they have three to four hundred slaves on each property.—*Baptist Annual Register*, 1800–1802, pages 1144–1146.